

## Aim for early wins that give the program experience and showcase upgrades as a way to attract customers

Several residential energy efficiency programs have successfully launched their efforts by focusing on completing early upgrades that build visibility for their program, create momentum, and allow programs to learn how to reach homeowners effectively. This early success provides results that the program can showcase to future customers. Significant program investments and efforts are required to launch any new initiative. In addition to building the internal capacity and infrastructure needed to operate the program, focus early investments on getting the attention of customers, kick-starting the market for contractors, and learning what strategies work to drive demand.

- Early on, [NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](#) [1] conducted a one-night phone-a-thon that offered residents in the town of Shrewsbury, Vermont, a low-cost home energy assessment as a quick way to engage one community. The program was flooded with demand. Sixty-nine assessments and 35 upgrades were undertaken by the 192 households contacted during the phone-a-thon, creating an “early win” for the program. Program staff—describing the process as “go, set, ready”—said this effort helped them learn how to communicate effectively about the program without investing in a comprehensive marketing plan. Getting people talking about the program as a result of community engagement proved to be an effective marketing strategy. A formal evaluation of the program’s first three years found that word-of-mouth was the second most reported way that homeowners heard about the program after media articles. For more information, see the case study [“Spotlight on Rutland County, Vermont: How Local Ties Lead to Local Wins.”](#) [2]
- [Efficiency Maine](#) [3] offered limited-time incentives to accelerate customer interest and acquisition early in the program and was able to lower the level of incentives as it increased the opportunities for customers to access favorable financing. The program initially offered customers a rebate for 30% of project costs, which could total up to \$1,500 for comprehensive projects that were projected to achieve at least 25% energy savings. The maximum incentive level was \$3,000 for deeper projects that achieved at least 50% savings. To respond to low demand—even with these high initial incentive levels—Efficiency Maine launched an additional, limited-time \$1,000 bonus incentive in the summer of 2010. The offer, available for four months, generated significant customer and contractor interest. When the offer period was over, contractors were able to sustain the level of activity generated by the limited-time offer because the offer had raised the visibility of the program. For more information about the time-limited incentives, see [“Spotlight on Maine: Transition to a Sustainable Level of Incentives”](#) [4].

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**Source URL:** <https://rpssc.energy.gov/tips-for-success/aim-early-wins-give-program-experience-and-showcase-upgrades-way-attract-customers>

### Links

[1] <http://www.nwwvt.org/>

[2] [http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/cs\\_rutland\\_drivingdemand.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/cs_rutland_drivingdemand.pdf)

[3] <http://www.efficiencymaine.com/>

[4]

[http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/maine\\_incentives\\_case\\_study.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/maine_incentives_case_study.pdf)[http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/maine\\_incentives\\_case\\_study.pdf](http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2014/01/f6/maine_incentives_case_study.pdf)